

# Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



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# Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

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# Life of the Spirit

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## CANA

BY

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.<sup>1</sup>

*And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee . . .  
But Thou hast kept the good wine until now . . . (John 2, 1).*



NOW we are going to meditate on the first appearance of our blessed Lady in the Gospel of St John; and it is an exceedingly cheerful thought. You can go to bed and sleep on it; I shall not frighten you.

St John has been telling us of the Eternal Father and the glory of the Son; how the Incarnation seemed to be, as it were, the Eternal Son leaping down as a flash of lightning. Now he introduces the Mother, with her 'kitchen' ways of wisdom. What a change—from the court of heaven to the little kitchen. Of course if we had to do these things we should make an awful bathos of it—but with her it is sublime. You see our dear Lady at once in the kitchen; I have an idea that at the Annunciation our dear Lady was on her knees in the kitchen. I can never quite make out whether she was on her knees to pray or to scrub—for the world required scrubbing—it still does. On her knees certainly, but what she was doing on her knees, I don't know. It is one of the theological problems. And here is the exquisitely beautiful scene of our dear Lady present at a wedding feast. . . . There is something really delicious about this scene—something that requires to be remembered in this age of decaying home life. Our dear Lady was there; and I have always found a great sense of something or other in what is said in the Gospel, 'The Mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples were invited'. I can quite imagine our dear Lady saying, 'If you invite me you will have to invite him'. And he would say, 'If you invite me the twelve will have to come too'. (I often think that accounts for the failure of the wine: to provide for twelve would exhaust any wine-cellar!). I feel quite a sense of mirth—I have never known whether to laugh or to cry at these things. Some of us have been privileged to be brought up in large families where we know

<sup>1</sup> From a retreat preached at St Dominic's Priory, Stone.

what a mother is. Our dear Lady had been well brought up by St Anne; and what I think so delightful about our Lady is that there was a wedding feast in that place and she was there. It is not worth having a wedding unless you have our Lady there. And she would say, 'I have come only on one condition—that I am in the kitchen'. Of course on a wedding day at least one person has to keep her head. So our Lady said, 'I will be in the kitchen'. They said, 'Of course—you will see that everything goes right'. And she answered, 'I will see to that'.

Oh dear, I just want, as it were, to be pulling at our Lady's apron strings . . . our dear Lady was at the wedding feast herself. There she is. And when there is any trouble, well you know you had better go and ask Mary about it. The Egyptians said, 'Go to Joseph' (Genesis), but the Nazarenes said, 'Go to Mary'. Off they went to Mary. What an exquisite light is shown on the relationship between our Lady and her Son. If any great artist or man of letters, say Shakespeare or Dante, was asked, 'Now would you mind introducing a scene? It is going to be a wedding scene and there is going to be no wine—and our Lady is going to ask our Lord to work a miracle'—the artist would say, 'No thank you—I can't do that; I shouldn't know what to say'—what to make our dear Lady say. Of course our dear Lady knew exactly what to say. She said, 'They have no wine'. She was stating a fact. They had not any wine. The relation is absolutely typical—the relation of a human Mother to a divine Son. It just lifts another little bit of the veil—like that which is moved when St Luke tells you how our Lady and St Joseph find the boy, the almost run-away Boy, and our Lady says, 'Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing'. They had been weeping for him; that was all, but quite enough. He went back with them, for eighteen years. Nothing for himself. *They* are sorrowing . . . what a perfect principle is that: eighteen years ago she had said, 'We are sorrowing'—he had his Father's work to do his Mother's will. And at the end of that time I can hear her saying, 'No, my dear Child, you must leave me; you must go to them . . . you are *theirs*; *they* are sorrowing'. It is our Lady's way of giving to the Incarnate Son his obedience to work. *They* have no wine. She took from her own lips the goblet of wine that was Jesus himself.

This scene of unparalleled tenderness—that tenderness which tends to laughter and tears. That joy which sometimes lends itself to laughter, a laughter that God is pleased with, laughter which in its very depth finds a well of tears. I am never quite certain of myself when I begin to talk of this. I never know quite whether I shall break down. The love in it is so exquisite . . . that Mother's love, that



Child's love, that love of Jesus, love of the Mother for her Son, the love of that Son for the Mother, the love of both for me! We can think about it—and if God gave us tonight for instance to dream about it, what dreams would be ours! . . . We should meditate again and again on the marriage feast of Cana. . . . What can give us the sense of home? I do not know—the sense of just being loved. Of course, love always means serving in some way; the greater the love the greater service rendered. If our love for our dear Lady is great and understanding, the water of religious life shall be turned into wine. And every moment in our life will be too good to be true . . . of course, supernaturally true!

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

BY

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

*Let this mind also be in you which was in Christ Jesus.*



GOOD exercise for Lent would be the study and sharing in the mind of Christ Jesus as it was immediately before and during his Passion.

St John in his record of the discourse of the Last Supper enables us to enter deeply into the mind of our Lord immediately before his Passion. He was about to be 'made sin for us', to identify himself with and do penance and make atonement for the sins of the whole world from the very beginning down to the end of time. He was about to become 'a worm and no man', 'a man of sorrows', abject and despised, and he foreknew to the minutest detail all the agony and dereliction which lay before him. And yet, his mind did not apparently dwell on these things, but on his inner life as the Second Person of the adorable Trinity and on the participation in that life by man which he had been sent to bring about, and to which his Passion and death were directed. 'I came forth from the Father and I came into the world; and now I leave the world and I return to the Father.' Here we have his eternal and temporal processions clearly referred to.

*Verbum manens apud Patrem.*

This last discourse is full of the cry 'Abba, Father', which was the cry of the whole being of the eternal and only-begotten Son; and the same attitude reveals itself on the few occasions when the silent Word emerged from his silence during the Passion, for almost every time, the word 'Father' is on his lips:

'Father—if it be possible—but thy will be done.'

'If I ask my Father he will send me twelve legions of angels.'

'Father, forgive them. . . .'

'Father, into thy hands. . . .'

The love of the Father is dwelt upon, his love for his Son, and for all those who will be incorporated with him—'This is my beloved Son'. A love which drove him to send his only Begotten into the world, and which will soon manifest itself in another temporal mission, that of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Comforter. And where the Son and the Holy Spirit of Love have taken up their abode, there also will the Father be. The entire theology of the mystery of the blessed Trinity is found in this last discourse, wherein the eternal Word shows us where, despite all the preoccupations of his active life, his mind has always been.

The love of God—the motive of all his works—and his Glory which is the end, here is his mind. He himself is the Father's glory, and so reminding his Father that he has fully accomplished his essential duty even as man, he asks, almost as a reward, for his own glorification, and for that of the Church which he has founded.

Then, turning to those whom he is to leave, he explains to them the nature of their incorporation into this his life, and warns them of the consequences of such other-worldliness—joy will be theirs, but it will be a joy in and through sorrow. Yet all the while, just as he has not been alone, but the Father has always been with him, so neither will they be alone. He himself will leave them in one way, but only so as to be able to return to them in a more spiritual and more perfect way. He will not go but will return and he will send the Paraclete for whose coming his departure is a necessary preparation, and where they are, there will the Father be. In the midst of all the sorrows and persecutions which the world will inflict on those who tread in his footsteps, the blessed Trinity is to be their home, and they to be a home to it, and in this union of love with God they will be united to each other 'that they may be one in us'.

When the actual Passion begins a veil is drawn over the soul of Christ which is plunged into a darkness which faith can only tentatively penetrate. Yet we can surmise from the few words and actions which are related something of what must have been passing in that holy of holies during the hours of suffering and dereliction.

All things which are made are, as St Thomas is fond of reminding us, but an image of what has been from all eternity, and of all things created the holy Soul of the Incarnate Word is the most complete



and perfect expression of the life of God; and that soul is the created expression of the mind of God.

The eternal Word, the only begotten Son is the Son, precisely because he receives his whole being from the Father. And having received all, he returns all save the inalienable property of Sonship and, from this double current of giving and receiving, proceeds the Holy Spirit who is their mutual love. And so in the human life of the Word incarnate, all can be summed up as a receiving all from the Father, which expresses itself in absolute devotion to the will of the Father and a returning of all to him by an absolute abandonment into his hands.

*Egressus ejus a Patre*

*Regressus ejus ad Patrem,*

can refer to his human life in its entirety as well as to his life within the Trinity. With the clarity of the most perfect human mind ever created, he saw all things as the expression of the Father's will, to do which was his meat and drink:

'Behold I come to do thy will.'

'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.'

'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' was the outcome of this attitude of mind. He saw his executioners not as such, but as instruments of the Father's love, accomplishing, though they knew it not, the most complete expression of that love. And as he saw everything in terms of the Father's will as coming down from the Father of Lights, so, too, all his own acts were in a sense not his, but those of the Father.

'I work the works of him that sent me—

'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.'

It could not, of course, be otherwise, for the eternal Son of the Father could not change his essential nature, which is to be a relation to the Father; to receive and give back all to him. The *Regressus* has its consummation in the *Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*, of Calvary's hour of utmost dereliction, but it had been the same from the first moment of human existence. His every breath and every fibre of his being was an offering, a sacrifice, a giving back to the Father of all he had and was and did, the absolute surrender of the most perfect of human wills.

These two aspects of his inner life are manifest in the Passion: 'Shall I not drink the chalice which my Father has given me? Father, thy will be done. . . .'

All is seen and accepted as coming from him and all is gathered up and given back:

'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'.  
And then follows the *Consummatum est*.

Another insight into the mind of Christ during these hours of suffering and abandonment is found in the tranquillity and peacefulness of his bearing, and his silent endurance of all that came to him. That his human sensitive nature was in anguish he allowed to be seen in the Agony in the Garden, but even there it was not allowed to disturb the tranquillity of his soul anchored in God by the hypostatic union. As Mother Julian puts it, 'God is our peace—he is very rest', and this is her way of expressing his immutability, his absolute transcendence of all created things. God cannot suffer change, cannot be injured or pained or hurt; but the bearing of the incarnate Word, who took a human nature precisely so as to be able to suffer and die, shows us how to transcend the trials and persecutions of the world, so as to participate even in this life in the eternal rest which is God himself.

Again, Christ was God; God is Goodness and Love, and goodness and love must give and diffuse themselves; and even in the midst of these, the most appalling sufferings of mind and body which human nature has ever undergone, the mind of Christ was not turned in upon itself, but retained its accustomed sensitiveness to the needs of others.

And although his state of passivity was parallel to that stage in the spiritual life when the soul must principally cease to act save for the act of absolute surrender to the activity of God, still he was not blind to the calls of charity, nor sparing of the use of his power when the occasion presented itself. Thus, immediately after his agony and sweat of blood, he healed the servant's ear, and ensured the safety of the disciples who abandoned him. After the insults and blasphemies in the halls of Annas and Caiphas, he converted by a merciful glance the disciple who had denied him; when his death was obviously inevitable and he was exhausted by the scourging, he endeavoured to open Pilate's eyes to the truth; as he staggered beneath the weight of the cross, he spoke words of comfort to the lamenting daughters of Jerusalem; and when in the throes of his death agony, he granted pardon to the repentant thief, arranged for his mother's future, and in so doing rewarded the only disciple who had had the courage to follow him to Calvary. There may sometimes be a temptation for us to become so immersed in and preoccupied with our own troubles and sufferings, great or small, real or imaginary, as to be blind to those of others; to be so intent on being what we call 'true to our contemplative vocation', passive under the divine action, that we consider ourselves exempt from the



calls of fraternal charity, forgetting that, as St Catherine says, it is only by 'love of our neighbour who has not first loved us, that one can make any sort of equal return of love to God, who loves us before we are, and by his love brings us into being'. There is nothing of that attitude in the incarnate Word, and here, as always, it is his mind which we must have in us.

The last three hours on Calvary, hours of silence broken only by the seven words, provide, none the less, as it were in cameo, a clear expression of the soul of Christ as it had been, as it was to the end, with all its characteristic traits clearly evident. Fr Bede Jarrett calls these seven words the revealing of our Lord's state of prayer; and one is reminded of Fr Martindale's translation of the psalm, *Ego autem orabam*, as, 'I am prayer', in the Hebrew. If the prophet of old could be bold enough to call himself prayer incarnate, how much more fittingly could the incarnate Word make that claim. Prayer, in its highest sense of contemplation, and a contemplation which flowed out into action; love of God expressing itself in love of man; that was his whole existence. As God knows and loves himself so that all his works *ad extra* are but the effulgence, the out-flow of his own inner Being: so the soul of Christ, united to the Word by the hypostatic union, unceasingly contemplated God in his essence, God in his works, and all things in God; and participating in the knowledge of God it participated also in his love, love of himself and of all that he had made. So, in these last hours, God is foremost in his thoughts—Father forgive—'My God why hast thou forsaken me?' 'Father into thy hands. . . .' Then in God he sees all those for love of whom he hung on the cross—his mother, the innocent, the guilty, the repentant sinner—even his enemies—all the souls for whom he lived and died. Even in the last hour it is still the case of *contemplare et aliis tradere contemplata*.

Then, too, there is the 'I thirst', which Mother Julian interprets as 'the ghostly thirst', the 'love-longing', which would draw all men to himself—'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself', and which will never be quenched until the last of the elect shall be safely united to the glorified head: another aspect of the infinite love which, while going out to all things, at the same time draws them all in to itself. He thirsts, too, for his Father's glory, for the accomplishment of his will. Before his Passion he had declared, 'I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised, and how am I straightened until it be accomplished'. Now he still thirsts, but the end is at hand. Every jot and tittle of the prophecies which had expressed that will have been fulfilled, the end for which he became Incarnate has been achieved, all that God could give has been given.

*Consummatum est*—all is complete, perfect—the created plan for him who is the uncreated Exemplar of all that is, has been fully worked out to its last detail—and in the process the human life of him in whom all things are life has been burnt up and consumed as a holocaust in the fire of love. Nothing more remains to be done, so with a loud cry he gave up the ghost. ‘Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.’

‘I came forth from the Father and I came into the world and now I leave the world and I go to the Father.’ *Egressus ejus a Patre; Regressus ejus ad Patrem. Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum, Amen.*

## PRIVATE REVELATIONS: WARP AND WOOF

BY

C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.



T times, reading the strange stories of the Saints, we may feel: ‘This incident cannot be true: it jars on my artistic sense; it conflicts with my knowledge of history; it is “out of keeping” with theology’. Then we may feel irreverent; that it may be we who are ‘out of tune’ with sanctity. On the one hand, ever since the future Benedict XIV’s *De . . . beatificatione* etc., ii. c. 32, it has been clear that the Church does not and cannot demand the assent of faith to any ‘private revelation’; but ecclesiastical approbation can ask our human belief in them according to the rules of prudence which offer them to us as probable and piously believable. The encyclical *Pascendi* (ASS; vol. xl; p. 649: 1907) says that the Church, when allowing the publication of such events, does not go guarantee for their truth, but simply *does not prevent* matters being published for which motives of human belief are not lacking. On the other hand, it would be rash positively to disbelieve what ecclesiastical approbation has often placed before us, such as the experiences of St Margaret Mary or St Bernadette, though even here it is the doctrine rather than the visions that is approved, as notably, too, in the case of great saints like SS. Bernard, Teresa or Catherine of Genoa. But it is not merely a question of belief or disbelief. An apparently preternatural experience may be genuinely divine in origin, yet the account of it may contain elements of purely human origin, and we are positively invited—it is a duty—to try to disentangle these. We recall a few principles admitted by all, adding illustrations that may seem to us apt.



I exclude the topic of *diabolic imitations* of divine experiences, though when St Paul says that Satan himself can be transformed into (disguised as) an angel of light (2 Cor. 11, 14) he is alluding to false doctrine plausibly preached as true, not to visions. And I exclude deliberate fabrications such as, e.g., prophecies (usually connected with something political, or wars): and also 'revelations' which are clearly due to overheated imaginations: Gerson (*De discrimine verarum visionum*) says that 'many' *holy and mortified men* were 'certain' (during the Great Schism) that they had been told *they* should be the next Pope: and Fr Poulain (*Des Grâces d'Oraison*: ed. 10; 1921, pp. 355; 360-4) adds that when the expulsion of the Congregations was being discussed in France, many pious women were 'told' that they must go to Rome about it, and that no less than 10 actually got there.

A 'revelation' may be badly reported—consciously or unconsciously—when, e.g., its recipient *dictates* his or her experience, especially if the account be rapidly spoken, or spoken during an ecstasy, maybe in disjointed sentences needing to be 'put together'. Thus St Angela of Foligno was quite angry with the poor priest who 'recorded' her: 'It wasn't at all like that!' Probably she meant that *no* human word could really correspond with the ineffable things she had 'heard'. Catherine Emmerich's visions were written down by a romantic poet, Brentano: who knows what he may have altered for the sake of 'style' or 'edification'? (Indeed, her assertion that St James the Greater was at our Lady's death was simply omitted by later editors because it cannot square with the *Acts*.) St Francis Xavier's letters were enormously amplified and his 'roughnesses' eliminated. Indeed, accurate quotation is a modern ideal and even now not universal. Thus at Fatima the Apparition emphatically said that she would reveal her identity during the last vision, and in fact then said: 'I am the Lady of the Rosary.' This is nearly always quoted as: 'I am Our Lady of the Rosary'. Bernadette, too, insisted on the strange 'abstract': 'I am the Immaculate Conception'—as though our Lord should say: 'I am the Incarnation'. More serious—some of the books before us make the Fatima Vision say that a little girl-friend of the children is in Purgatory 'till the end of the world'. These words are not in Fr De Marchi's authoritative book *Uma Senhora* (ed. 3), so either they have been added or, perhaps more probably, omitted as an 'offendiculum' (as Trent says, Sess. xxi, Decree on Purgatory).

Again, when 'seers' are questioned, there is the possibility of 'suggestion'. Thus when Canon Formigão asked Lucia how old the Child Jesus seemed in the October 13th apparition at Fatima, she said: 'Like Deolinda' (a child of two). When he asked her cousin

Francisco whether the Child was big or little, he answered: 'Little'. 'Was he as big as Deolinda?' 'Just like that!' said the small boy. This was unimportant. But when the Canon on September 27th (i.e., *before* the final apparition when 'the Lady' revealed her identity) interrogated the boy's sister Jacinta, he began: 'Do you consider you have been seeing Our Lady . . . since May?', she said: 'I do, Senhor'. And with Lucia he started at once: 'Is it true that Our Lady appeared to you?' 'It is true'. Twice more he uses the expression 'Our Lady', though usually he keeps to '*the* Lady'. If this is correctly reported, should he not—being a trained theologian and sent expressly to enquire into events about which the clergy were to exhibit extreme reserve—have been more circumspect? But *is* it correctly reported? For Canon Barthas in his French amplification of Fr da Fonseca's Italian book makes Lucia herself say 'the Blessed Virgin', when in the original account she always correctly says 'the Lady'.

Again, a 'seer' may misinterpret an experience owing to its intrinsic obscurity. Thus St Peter at first thought he was really meant to 'kill and eat' the animals he saw in vision (*Acts* 10, 10); St Bernadette, being told to drink 'from the water there', started off to the river Gave, knowing no other spring, and had to be called back. St Mechtildis prayed that St Gertrude might have 'patience', and our Lord told her that she possessed that virtue already and that 'patientia' was derived from 'pax' and 'scientia', which it is not. This does not militate against the genuineness of the experience, but does show that the human mind, reflecting on it, can add something of its own which it does not distinguish clearly from what was 'given'. Lucia, on October 13th 1917 itself, said that our Lady had declared that the war will finish 'today' and on the 19th she thrice repeated that our Lady had said those very words. 'How do you explain that there has been fighting ever since then?' 'I don't know. I know only that I heard her say that the war was finishing on the 13th'. 'Some people said that she said "soon"?' 'I have repeated the very words of our Lady'. Jacinta, interrogated, said that our Lady declared: 'If people correct themselves, the war will finish: if they do not, the world will come to an end'. She added that Lucia heard better than she did; also, that our Lady said the war would end when she arrived in heaven; and further: 'I think it will end on Sunday'. Lucia herself said that she heard our Lady's words interiorly and could give only their 'sense'.

The history of visions shows that when they are 'imaginative', i.e., make use of 'imagery' in any sense, the habits of mind, the mental 'furniture' of the seer, may probably provide all the imagery. Thus the elaborate visions of St Elizabeth of Schönau or St Hildegarde



reflect all the art of their period. When a 'heaven of crystal' is believed in by contemporary science, it will be seen in vision. In 'historical' visions, e.g., of the Passion, one Saint will see three nails, another, four; the cross will be carried, the spear driven in, on the right or again on the left. St John's apocalyptic visions were undoubtedly 'true', yet his imagery is hereditary or drawn from his environment, and Ezekiel himself derived the description of his cherubs from Babylonian art-forms. The biographer and successor of St Frances of Rome freely says that the Saint's ecstasies contained pious *meditations* due to her personal 'activity'.<sup>1</sup> A vision, moreover, may at first be obscure and clear itself up later, or the 'seer' may come to have more words at his or her disposal; thus the child Lucia began by describing her vision quite 'materialistically', but, when adult, said that our Lady was 'all of light'; that they distinguished dress from face and mantle from hands by 'variations' or 'undulations' of light; that what she apparently had called 'embroidery' must be eliminated—she had meant that, e.g., the edges of the mantle were 'brighter light', and that what she had called 'ear-rings' were also a brighter light; that our Lady's face was not 'flesh', but *carnea lux*.

This gives us a hint of 'rationalisation' due to one's reflecting on something one has seen and reducing it to normal. Thus Jacinta, I think, said when our Lady disappeared: 'The door shut so fast that we feared it would catch her feet'. The metaphor of a 'door' is quite natural (see St John, Apoc., 5, 1: 'a door was opened in heaven', and he was called up to pass through it): so when our Lady vanished 'into heaven' the children could easily think of a door opening and shutting; the naïve little sentence that followed is their no less natural reaction to the suddenness of the disappearance. Compare, perhaps, Lucia's description of her vision of hell: she says it occurred in a flash; but twenty years later she could describe it in great detail and with the 'normal' imagery of 'Hell open to Christians'—souls in human form whirled upwards by flames and demons recognisable by their 'horrible and disgusting shapes of frightful and unknown beasts'.

St Camillus de Lellis could distinguish clearly between his *sorts* of experience. Thus, in a time of stress, he *dreamed* (he is explicit about that) that his favourite crucifix said to him: 'Don't be afraid, man of small soul: go ahead, for I will help you'. He told this to all his friends. After his death, three witnesses swore that he had told them

<sup>1</sup> At Fatima, Lucia saw the Holy Child in St Joseph's arms; Jacinta and Francisco, standing at his side. I do not know why Mr Walsh, in his book on Fatima, says (p. 147) that St Joseph was dressed in white. The only questionnaires I can find (*Uma Senhora*, pp. 179, 190) say that both he and the Child were dressed in bright red, *encarnado*.

—under pressure—that on a different occasion when he was this time awake, he had seen this crucifix reach its arms lovingly towards him and say almost the same words. Assuming the witnesses to have been accurate, what really happened? The possibilities are fully discussed by the Camillian Fr Dalla Giacomo in *Domesticum*, July, 1922. Did God cause the wooden figure physically to move? Did he act directly on the saint's physical organs of sight and hearing so that he *thought* the figure moved and spoke though in reality it did not? (Would this not have been generating an illusion?) Or did God act so strongly on his mind, making him feel so intensely the love of our Lord for him, and the certainty that his vocation was from God, that this flooded *outward* through his whole being, from an innermost knowledge, to ideas, imagination and even senses?<sup>2</sup> This would be the inversion of a normal visual or auditory experience, in which an external shock is given to the nerves, this is carried up to the brain, the sight is seen or the sound heard, and then the mind forms an idea. But psychologically I see no reason at all against the 'shock' being administered first to the mind (in the case of many a divine communication, to what they call the 'fine point' of the soul, or again, its 'innermost'), after which, as I suggested, the *whole human mechanism* would be set vibrating, till an external vision or voice was experienced. Far from diminishing the reality of the divine communication, it would, to my thinking, make it much more certain and reliable.

From this it will be seen how far we are from wishing to 'minimise' the reality of 'private revelation' in general or in particular, and certainly St John of the Cross was so, yet he insists that we ought to be 'detached' from all 'images' (and here even an 'idea' counts as an image)—not only because they are not God<sup>3</sup>, but because by means of them human misinterpretations can quite innocently enter in. And if I have rather often mentioned Fatima, that is because, having recently been there, I am very interested in it.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Compare St John Gualbert who, having made (on Good Friday) a tremendous act of sacrifice for the love of Christ, knelt before a crucifix and felt it lean forward and embrace him. But in this instance the crucifix was a painted icon.

3 Or even a pure spirit. I do not think that modern writers are inclined to say that e.g. angels invest themselves with a 'body of air' to make themselves visible, as medieval writers frequently suggested.

4 Fr E. Dhanis, S.J., of Louvain published a discussion of the events there as recorded in the contemporary interrogations (1917) and much amplified by Lucia in 1936 and 1941, in the Dutch review *Streven*, and has kindly communicated to me his French version of his notes. He alludes to two points which had specially puzzled me. In 1941 Lucia wrote that the three children had had a triple vision of an Angel in 1916. Her mother told Canon Formigão (October, 1917) that about that time (September or October, 1916) the children had seen a sort of sheeted form or 'silhouette'. The Canon asked Lucia why, when he interrogated her, she had not mentioned that. No answer. 'That time you ran away?' 'I think I ran away'.



It remains that the immediate change in the children, due to the Apparitions, was so amazing and the penitential and mystical life of the two younger ones and their early and heroic death so overwhelmingly impressive; and that the world-wide spread of the devotion to our Lady of Fatima is so startling; and that the ecclesiastical approbations are so weighty, that it would be rash in the extreme to doubt that a divine communication was made by God, through our Lady, at Cova da Iria. None the less, we are *obliged* out of sheer reverence to that divine message to seek to disentangle 'warp and woof'.

## WHAT I SAW AT KONNERSREUTH

BY

HUBERT J. URBAN, M.D.

*Aude Sapere* (Hahnemann).



‘HAVE the courage of your own convictions’: this is the sense of the above maxim. From it follows logically the duty of expressing one’s own opinion even if it differs fundamentally from ‘official medicine’. For there are situations in which silence does not represent a virtue but a fault.

The judgment upon Theresa Neumann of Konnersreuth (Bavaria,

Now Fr de Fonseca says that in 1915 Lucia and four little girl friends (not Jacinta or Francisco) saw a dazzling vague diaphanous apparition apparently human in form. This apparition was twice repeated during the following weeks. Now Lucia was to say (1941) that the angelic apparition impressed them so much because it was the first vision to be so distinct (*assim manifesta*). We seem free to accept one of three views—either the children saw the ‘sheeted form’ when Lucia’s mother said they did—in which case it is odd that they told her about that and not about the Angel; or, that she was wrong in her dates and that had been a sort of preliminary vision a year earlier—a faceless form which the child described as best she could as a ‘man in a sheet’—and then it is odd that no record exists of the fuss that parents surely made about such a story (for the children had been frightened): or, we might take the purely rationalist view that Lucia, brooding over this event, had transformed it in the course of years into the angelic ‘clear’ (also triple) apparition, which the children mentioned to no one. But this would imply an enormous mental ‘development’ of the original experience which we could hardly accept. For the angelic apparitions were related in minute detail. The other problem is, that when Lucia after long years in her convent began to reveal the second part of the ‘secret’ confided to her by the Apparition (i.e. the spread of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary) she says that the Lady often spoke (as from July) of ‘*my* Immaculate Heart’ and indeed showed it to her wreathed with thorns, so that she could have had no doubt as to who the Apparition was, though the Lady had emphasised that she would not reveal who she was or what she wanted till October 13th. I form no opinion about this; it must be left to the study of theological experts and psychologists.

Germany), pronounced in 1927 (Erlangen) by Professor Dr G. Ewald, late director of the 'Psychiatrisch-Neurologischen Universitätsklinik' at Göttingen, is still today looked upon as a 'dogma' in medical quarters. His verdict is *hysteria*.

In my view that diagnosis is wrong, as I myself was able to ascertain at Konnersreuth on 12th and 13th October, 1944, with my own observations. As a pupil of the 'Psychiatrische Klinik', at the University of Vienna, Paris, etc., I also may venture a judgment on this question, since, as is known, the famous researches into hysterias started from Vienna.

My assertion will not surprise those who know the story of the origin of the expert 'dogma'. At first there was the deep impression which the experiences at Konnersreuth gave to Professor Ewald. Then this impression in course of time faded and gave place to the opposite influence of his superiors of those days. Finally, the regard for his future career during an era of materialistic medicine was of some consequence. All that taken together produced the expert evidence which culminated in the designation: 'Hysteria'.

Even if that diagnosis were correct it would, indeed, only mean the substitution of one unknown for another. And in any case the greatest precaution should have been used in introducing the word 'hysteria', for this reason, that it always has a pejorative flavour which, particularly among laymen, suggests an attitude of contempt.

My experience of the popular misconceptions regarding the events at Konnersreuth has made it seem necessary to sum up the question from the medical point of view. Let me say first that from a sojourn of many years in foreign countries I have had the benefit of acquaintance with many of the best features of the modern revolutions in medical science. I am particularly grateful that my apprenticeship was not restricted to the neuro-psychiatric school but that I was also trained in the best neuro-surgical schools. But, as Goethe has it, 'Wisdom broadens the mind but also impedes it; action animates but limits', I would speak here not so much from professional wisdom, but from the experience of the facts as they appeared to me and as I wrote them down from memory a few days after my return from Konnersreuth to my war-scarred hospital.

My visit to Konnersreuth occurred on 12th and 13th October 1944. I had come from Vienna via Prague and Egen, and after a journey of twenty-one hours, prolonged by the inevitable effects of bombs, air raid alarms and the disorganisation of war, I reached Waldsassen in the Upper Palatinate. There I first visited and examined the magnificently endowed Cistercian Abbey before making the four-mile uphill climb to Konnersreuth on foot. Here I presented myself at



the presbytery and was at once received by the parish priest, Father Joseph Naber, in spite of a refusal from the porter. He made a very favourable impression on me both then and later; old in years (he had been parish priest for 36 years), he was mentally alert, discreet but warm and expansive, he was certainly a realist and kind, but not 'mystical' or *exalté*.

After some discussion he promised to try to arrange for me a special meeting with Theresa Neumann. But I must be prepared to wait an hour, for Theresa liked to hide herself, was difficult to find, and refused most of the callers. But I had scarcely waited ten minutes in the parlour before the door opened and there stood before me Theresa Neumann herself. She had had a mind to call on her sister, who was employed at the presbytery as housekeeper. The parish priest told me later that she had hesitated at first but had suddenly abandoned her usual reserve and followed him into the parlour. He soon left us to ourselves so that I was able to have a detailed conversation with her for about three-quarters of an hour.

Accustomed to taciturnity, I did not ask any questions. At first I was even too shy to interrogate her, aware as I was that so close to me, just the other side of the table, sat such a 'far-famed phenomenon'. In her dialect of the Upper Palatinate, which is difficult to understand, she told me about a mishap of the day before (Wednesday 11th October) which Father Naber had already mentioned briefly. Theresa Neumann had been at her favourite occupation of decorating the high altar for Adoration Day in the parish church. A board had tilted and she had fallen from the scaffold on her right hand and had hit the back of her head violently. Afterwards she felt numbness, retching, giddiness, swelling, and a painful limitation of movement in the wrist of her right hand; this lasted until the day of my visit.

So Father Naber suggested (and Theresa Neumann tolerated the idea) that I should examine her with a view to ascertain whether she was suffering from concussion. The examination resulted in the suspicion of a slight fracture at the end of the right 'spoke-bone' but at the same time it brought the rare and welcome opportunity of examining to some extent the bodily frame of that unique 'case'. First of all there were the stigmata on both hands and feet which have been frequently described. These are usually covered by mittens and are on both hands above the third middle hand bone, rather smaller inside than outside, where they measure about four-fifths of an inch in length and two-fifths of an inch in width. They are set around and covered by a very thin, transparent skin. And it is just the same above the third middle foot bone.

Theresa's behaviour was absolutely unaffected. You would have thought you were dealing with an ordinary country woman, or perhaps with a rich peasant's wife: determined, clear, almost vivacious in her primitive way of speaking, strong-boned, about five feet nine tall, of healthy complexion, and with strong hands suggesting rustic toil.

A black kerchief showed only a tuft of grey hair, above her well proportioned face. A black jacket covered her broad shoulders and hips, and her clothing was completed by the already mentioned black knitted mittens, a dark skirt, a black apron, and finally by black stockings and shoes. Not a trace of irritation or affectation, not even the slightest suspicion of coquetry or 'hysteria' could be seen in her behaviour, and still less in her words. On the contrary, she seemed to be a simple, unaffected, almost dense country woman, but gifted with mother-wit. I had formed quite a different idea of Theresa Neumann and she would have been disappointing at the first meeting had it not been for her deep-set interesting eyes. With these she looked at me for some time, and they suggested that what I saw of her nature was only a trivial veil, behind which there was yet hidden something extraordinary, which distinguished her indeed essentially from her sister, who had shortly before, at my irritating ring, opened the gate. But the features and build of both sisters were very much alike.

The private interview of about 40 minutes turned mainly upon the use of popular medicine. Theresa Neumann has daily about 10-20 child and adult patients, who come to see her about their injuries, as they have no medical practitioner in the vicinity. They are treated with ointments or, in case of internal diseases, with tisanes of medical herbs. Externally she uses Peru balsam and particularly an alcoholic extract of pine tops (I believe it is called: 'Spitzel-Wasser'—top water, in her dialect). Another dialect expression frequently used was 'Puzzln', meaning children (little Puzz; 'Putze' meaning 'goblin' in Middle High German), therefore she spoke also of (St) 'Mary with the 'Puzzl', and took a lively interest in my 'Puzzlin'. Six children did not seem to be very many in her opinion, as her parents had ten, of whom she was the eldest. The next day I made the acquaintance of two nephews and a niece, the children of one of her sisters. Those two nephews were twins, though very unlike each other, and in my capacity as a neurologist, I examined one of them, Konrad Hertl, at the request of Theresa Neumann's parents and that in her sitting-room, which had formerly been the tailor's workshop. Thus I had the opportunity of meeting the parents too, and was able to talk with them for about half an hour without interruption. The



tranquillity and seclusion of the simple home in the small yellow one-storied house with the irregular walls was much more in keeping with their tastes than those former times when they were troubled with crowds of 2,000 visitors a day.

On that Friday, 13th October, Theresa Neumann, at the suggestion of Father Naber, had appointed half-past nine a.m. as the time for my visit to her bed-sitting room at Neumann's small house to witness the ecstasies combined with the bleedings. These, as is well known, appear on most Fridays, generally in accordance with the events of the ecclesiastical year. They usually begin shortly before midnight on Thursday. It was so on this day. We were shown in punctually at the fixed hour and were led by Father Naber to the first floor. And I here came to the event which I do not hesitate to consider even in my medical experience as the greatest of my career despite a very wide and varied acquaintance with such things. I am still today under the influence of that event.

In the left-hand corner of the room large enough to possess two windows, of which the left one was somewhat screened, stood a tall bedstead with white bedclothes. A human being with white headcloth and nightdress reclined on the bed in a half-sitting position. One could see at first only the white hands with one red spot on the back of each and, also, the face. But what a face: quite pale, hollow, the nose yellow like wax, boldly protruding, together with the chin, almost as in the case of someone dying, or at least after a very long illness. A streak of blood, about 2 in. broad, reached from both eyes to the lower jaw, growing smaller at the bottom, and having stained the brim of the coverlet and the headcloth as well as the sleeves. Those streams of blood coming from the eyes seemed dark red, streaked, and already somewhat dried up. Standing near the door, at a distance of some ten feet from the bed, I stared unflinchingly at the head of the patient, who was obviously very ill. Only with difficulty was it possible to recognise in her the simple, but healthy-looking Theresa Neumann of the day before. She had reached in her *via crucis* the point just after Christ's first fall under the cross. While I was present she witnessed Christ's second fall. The vision was several times so moving that she rose to a sitting position on the bed, at the same time keeping her arms slightly bent. It was an attitude of perfect artistry, combined with such a grace of movement as may be found only in the suppleness of the Japanese, but which nobody would have expected in the rather uncouth, rustic person she had been only the day before.

She groaned intensely several times and murmured incoherent words in her dialect, which sounded still more difficult to understand

on that day, though I could detect some resemblance to the dialect of my native country, the neighbouring Upper Austria. And she mixed those words with bits of sentences in a foreign language, which Father Naber translated and said were Aramaeic, according to the expert evidence of various philologists. As is well known, Aramaeic was the Hebrew dialect spoken in Palestine in the time of Christ.

He said that Theresa was 'stone-blind', an impression she had at once made on me, too. Her half-open eyes mostly looked straight forward or at the coverlet, but frequently also to the right where a cloth was hanging against the wall. For the rest, one heard in the room only the constant twitter of perhaps more than a dozen birds in a big cage set into the wall opposite the bed. A pretty domestic altar in the baroque-style stood opposite the door. The visitors who were present with me now left the room at the priest's invitation, while he suggested that I should come nearer the bed and take the left hand of the patient. The stigmata on the hands were not now bleeding, but they appeared more clearly than yesterday, owing to the clarity of the skin on this day. When the priest asked Theresa whether I had been there already, she denied it but conceded at once that she had talked to me already once before.

There now followed some information of a private nature about myself and my family, partly on being questioned by the priest, partly spontaneously. Between the answers there was an interval of about three minutes, during which she again went through a stage of the *via crucis*, with outward signs of suffering. Then I bent over her to within eight inches of her face to see as precisely as possible the blood-marks and, first of all, where they came from. The blood seemed to come from the spot where the lower lids rise from the cheeks, but also from the cheeks themselves, although a marked bleeding spot was not discernible. It seemed to be a regular blood-weeping, or alternatively, blood-perspiration, remotely comparable to the 'parenchymatous' (tissue of a soft organ) trickle-bleeding in the case of operations in a brain debris cavity, but even more slowly and diffuse. When I took my departure at about a quarter past ten, Theresa Neumann said, still in her somewhat incoherent manner: 'One must pray much, in order to get over the hardships. . . .'

I jotted down these memories of the event before reading with care what had been written on Konnersreuth. That was possible only at home after the war. In doing so, I discovered that there had been only quite trifling differences, compared with the accounts written by visitors of former times. Though already eight years have passed since the last printed publications on Konnersreuth, as far as I can discover from them, the phenomena have not changed at all. Moreover, the



events of Konnersreuth remained the same also after the war, as visitors of recent times (September 1945) report. In course of the 'defence to the bitter end . . .' (April 1945), SS. guns went into position against Konnersreuth too, and the small house of the Neumanns itself was hit.

The absence of the death-scene in those events of Friday morning, October 13th, was unusual, but it was not the first occasion. At that time the visions of Theresa Neumann ceased before the final phase, so Father Naber informed me. The crown of thorns also never appeared, i.e., the bleeding from a chaplet of wounds in the head, which, however, leave the forehead always unhurt. This was explained by supposing that the heavy fall on the back of her head two days before was in some way responsible: for indeed Theresa Neumann had been frequently spared the entire suffering on Fridays when she had been confined to her bed by some temporary illness. While I was there she had much pain in her right wrist, which, to be sure, had swollen a good deal two days before, owing to the fall. But in her ecstasy she did not seem to remember it, because when the priest asked her the reason of these pains in her wrist-bone, she answered (in her dialect): 'I don't know . . .'

At midday on that day I spent almost an hour with Father Naber. He reported that Theresa Neumann had that morning had a vision about the present Pope Pius XII, to the effect that he was seriously suffering from a liver complaint and from his stomach. (Inquiries privately made at a later date confirmed the exactness of the vision, since the Pope had been ill temporarily at about that time, but owing to the war details could not be learned till now). Father Naber also showed me the body-linen of Theresa Neumann's Good Friday Passion. Once a year, as is known, she witnesses the flagellation, combined with the crowning with thorns, which cause the stigmata in her hands and feet and side to open, blood-weeping, etc. The white headcloth could be seen with the blood-spots corresponding to the crown of thorns; further, a bandage with coagulated blood from the wound of the left breast, where the blood-clot represents a true cast of a wound in soft parts of the body, about two inches long. Innumerable blood spots, about the size of a small palm, repeatedly rimmed and brownish coloured, could be perceived on the bed-jacket, which had long sleeves, to be buttoned up to the top, and reaching down to the hips. Particularly large were the traces of the bleeding wounds in the hands, and of the flagellation.

Of course, I could not see anything of the greatest phenomenon, namely, that she has abstained for 18 years (since 1927) absolutely from taking food and avoids as well any liquids, except a few cubic

inches of water to enable her to swallow the Host. Certainly, this supernatural manifestation is a 'negative' thing and cannot be examined during a short visit by a single person. But the personality of Theresa Neumann as well as her environment do not allow me to entertain the slightest doubt that her abstinence from food is real.

At Waldassen, the nearest larger town, I examined the original medical certificate and the original photographs, among them also that of the wound in the breast. This was at the house of the Neumann's family physician, who had been resident there for years. Unfortunately, all medical documents regarding the first illness towards the end of the first World War are missing, as no neurological examination nor X-ray photographs were made. We can only conjecture today of the nervous disease of that time, lasting several years. Of that time, now already more than 25 years ago, there exists only a short exchange of notes, concerning some slight accident. But Sanitary Councillor Dr O. Seidl is a representative of his profession far surpassing the average country doctor. His rich library, endowed as well with books on theology and history of art, confirmed me in that opinion, together with a long conversation I had with him, when I learned that he had been occupied for years with 'para-psychological' problems. For example, he had conducted a stomach operation under hypnosis, when ether was unavailable and other modern anæsthetics had not been invented.

It is significant in Theresa Neumann's normal psychology that she, in accordance with her energetic constitution, can readily sympathise enthusiastically with a call like Joan of Arc's. This means that she is not a natural contemplative. Although the contemplative life, therefore, forced upon her by her previous ailments and her present extraordinary condition, does not suit her at all, she renounced the practical profession of a missionary sister and resigned herself to her fate. But the visions cannot be dismissed with the slogan of 'auto-suggestion', still less can the slogan be applied to the origin of the stigmata in that form, size, and shape. For anything of this nature, produced by hypnosis or auto-suggestion (in hysterical persons, for instance) looks, nevertheless, essentially different from our case; so too do wounds arising from continuous self-mutilation. In Vienna, during 10 years immediately after the first World War, illness was welcome to some of the unemployed, because it meant hospital and protection against hunger and cold. That great distress gave the medical practitioner many opportunities, as the army surgeon had in the second World War, to recognise simulation and self-produced ailments. But that is not the case with Theresa Neumann's stigmata, because they show two principal differences: they do not heal up,

and yet they also do not suppurate, although they are in no way dressed or sterilised, and, on the other hand, they do not show any traces of manipulation or self-mutilation.

They are quite unlike the wounds in the hands of an artist known to me, who night after night had had his hands nailed alternately to a board, but had used antiseptic precautions. He could, we may remark in passing, regulate the bleeding as he wished; but this was not of much significance because he belonged to those human beings, particularly rare in Europe, who can influence the rhythm of the heart (and thus the throb of the pulse) arbitrarily.

It is just as mistaken to try to explain the real blood perspiration of Theresa Neumann by the so-called *indicans* perspiration or something of that sort. A professional colleague of mine in Vienna has that power. But again, it looks essentially different, rather like well-diluted red ink. Quite apart from its very different local distribution, the exuded red liquid always proved to be a known pigment, but in the case of Theresa Neumann it is undeniably blood.

The case at Konnersreuth represents nothing new, when we consider the many historic instances of people who have received the stigmata and other supernatural powers, and who are to be found only in the Catholic Church (in the Roman as well as in the Greek-Catholic). They number about 300, 40 of them men, and the majority come from Romance countries, and begin with Francis of Assisi in the 13th century. Our case is probably the one which has been the most thoroughly examined and is therefore perhaps the most famous one, but by no means the only living one. It is finally, only a ring in the following historically verified chain which will hardly have come to its end in Theresa Neumann:

Anna Katharine Emmerick (born Dülmen, West Germany, 1776), stigmatised in 1798, died in 1824; Margarethe Gschir (born Steinach, Brenner, Austria, in 1798), mystically favoured in 1824, stigmatised in 1834, died in 1869; Viktoria Höcht (born Wolpertswende, Palatinate, Germany, in 1867), stigmatised in 1890, died in 1909; Anna Schäffer (born Mindelstetten, Bavaria, in 1882), stigmatised in 1909, died in 1925; Theresa Neumann (born Konnersreuth, Bavaria, in 1898), stigmatised in 1926, living. (I owe the above data to H. P. v. Lama, of Innsbruck).

The alternative diagnosis of the physicians was the same in most of the pertinent cases, namely, hysteria or humbug. Since the latter could soon be excluded, the former false diagnosis of hysteria lasted usually the longest, at least with the majority of those medical men who hold materialistic views. Why? Because the symptoms are similar but not the same, in proportion as natural illness (for instance,



hysteria), or supernatural occurrences leave their traces behind. The organs where the phenomena appear, the human body, the human spirit, are the same, the 'last part of the act is common', but not the origin. A difference which is not at once plain to everybody.

What, then, can be said in general by the physicians about Theresa Neumann and her extraordinary phenomena? It is very meagre:

1. It is not a disease, therefore it is not hysteria.
2. It is not humbug.
3. Her concurrent maladies (inflammation of the throat, for instance) are irrelevant and represent ordinary phenomena, likewise also her first illness (paralysis, etc.), although the diagnosis of the latter is not exactly certain; but the symptoms are certain, though also only fragmentary. Nevertheless, the organic symptoms were so serious and so reliably authentic that the evidently sudden healing cannot be explained medically, i.e., naturally.

4. What can be done *by medical men* to change these negative statements into positive ones? Nothing. Just as there would be no sense in trying to explain the deep effect of a Bach cantata on an audience by calculating the number of oscillations of the sounds produced, so also it would seem impossible to detect the cause at the back of these phenomena by clinical examinations, however subtle they might be. For it is on quite a different plane, and outside the scope of medicine as understood today. That is the reason why this science in this case is unable to explain, and can only describe.

5. Although it will not be possible, therefore, to give an aetiology of the symptoms, a completion of the medical documentation made so far seems, nevertheless, to be necessary, since they are already many years old. First of all, X-ray photographs must be taken and the abstinence from food examined anew by investigations into the metabolism. These examinations can only be made in a hospital. An international commission of experts should be brought together as controlling physicians, who, with their different backgrounds and attitudes to her conception of life, would watch one another closely, much as it is the case when a potentate is confined to his bed.

6. The judgment of such a mixed commission of physicians, as impartial as possible, ought to be able to convince even the most obstinate sceptics of the supernatural nature of the Theresa Neumann phenomena; in so far as they are open to conviction.

7. But neither written nor spoken words, nor photography, film, nor record can reproduce the 'something' which belongs essentially to the events at Konnersreuth. The brush of an 'intuitive artist', or perhaps the forceful language of a Nietzsche combined with Goethe's

eye penetrating into the secrets of nature would be required to do justice to them. Only personal contact with Theresa Neumann can give a pure picture of the sublime happenings there. Therefore, I am grateful to my good fortune in having been there, particularly as a physician.

## ENTRY INTO THE NIGHT OF THE SENSES

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

**I**F we are right in supposing that when Richard Rolle describes the third and highest degree of love he is really considering the illuminative rather than the unitive way, we can fit him very neatly into a pattern of spiritual development. Thus we discover his own personal experiences of burning love and heavenly sound entering into his description of 'Singular Love' which is in his own eyes the most perfect state. The special but accessory favours which he had received from God at the beginning of this new way of life were the love in his breast, which was so fervent as to convey even a physical sensation of heat, and an interior sound of heavenly music. And these we find as part of the permanent state of love which he calls 'Singular'.

Singular love is when all comfort and solace are closed out of thy heart but that of Jesus Christ alone. It seeks no other joy. For the sweetness of him who is in this degree is so comforting and lasting in His love, so burning and gladdening that he or she that is in this degree may feel the fire of love burning in their souls . . . then the soul is Jesus-loving, Jesus-thinking, Jesus-desiring, only breathing in the desire for Him, singing to Him, burning for Him, resting in Him. Then the song of praise and love is come. . . . (*The Form of Living*).<sup>1</sup>

But although this way of love seems to be very permanent and very comfortable 'so that the soul is so much comforted in the praise and love of God, and till death comes is singing spiritually to Jesus and in Jesus and of Jesus' (id.), nevertheless there are many sins which are still lurking in the soul even after the hardships of purification and which are still hindering the completion of the process of supernaturalising the whole man. There are times when the soul is given some special assurances as to the pureness of its love, but never can a man be satisfied or complacent about his state. He is always in danger, however many graces God may have poured out upon him.

In this degree of love thou shalt over-come thine enemies, the

<sup>1</sup> Selected writings of Rolle edited by Heseltine.

world, the devil and the flesh. But nevertheless thou shalt always have fighting whilst thou livest; and till thou dost die it behoves thee to take care to stand so that thou fall not into delights, neither in evil thoughts, nor in evil words, nor in evil works (*Ego Dormio*, Heseltine, p. 95).

And he says elsewhere that no man can completely slay 'engendered concupiscence' nor live so as never to sin in this life. (*Fire of Love*, Misyn, p. 158).

This is a salutary observation at all times and helps to explain how the really devout Christian is never the complacent one, and how the further advanced a man is on the way to perfection the more conscious he is of the danger of sin and of his own weakness. But it is a lesson which must be most urgently dinned into those who have passed through the initial stages of purification, have been given perhaps some of these 'experiences' which from time to time announce the beginning of a new phase, and are probably at the gateway to this singular way of love which St Thomas calls 'proficient'. For it is very easy to remain at the very gate and yet to miss the opportunity of pushing it open and stepping forward. If a man has progressed so far he will be tempted to feel that he is fairly 'safe', that the peace and virtue that have come to him are proud possessions, that any experience of God's presence he may have had was as though God had said, 'Well done thou good and faithful servant' and that he may definitely class himself among the elect. The result of these temptations if they are yielded to—and they are subtle and insidious temptations which easily deceive—is that progress ceases, and the man relapses into a pride or conceit which is very self-satisfied and which leads him to patronise others. The sign of this pride is a certain unteachableness in matters concerning the spiritual life; he holds on to his own opinions with a vehemence altogether out of proportion to their importance; he is unwilling to accept a contrary opinion even from his director or other authority. He feels so secure in the gifts that God has given him that he begins to act as so many heretics have acted, basing his certainty on an interior inspiration which he regards as of the Spirit, instead of on the outward judgment of authority.

The proud, truly, says Rolle, and those full of wrath seem to themselves so worthy that they can suffer nothing. . . . And that they have taken up they always defend, though it be false or untrue; and neither with authority nor reason will they be overcome, that they should not be seen to have said what were unaccording. And when they are untaught—and that they wot well—yet they will behave as if they were inspired in all things that belong to God. (*Fire of Love*, Misyn, p. 43).

There are surely many heretics who have begun well and have arrived



at this second main stage of their life and then fallen into pride of intellect and confidence in their own 'spirit'.

By now the grosser sins have been overcome and even the more fleshly and sensual temptations will have ceased and the good Christian may have become so accustomed to that type of sin and temptation that the new forms catch him unawares; if he is not still conscious of the deep-rooted self-love which remains even through all that previous era of purification he will be easily led into conceit. Indeed the conceit of the 'pious' and the 'devout' is almost proverbial; and they never recognise it in themselves being too occupied with their experiences and interior states to be conscious of their over-bearing attitude towards the rest of the world:

Wherefore they change the joy of incorruptible cleanness to wantoned beauty which shall not last. This soothly would they not do unless they were blinded with the fire of froward love, the which wastes (away) the burgeoning of virtue and nourishes the plants of all vice. Forsooth many are not set on womanly beauty nor like lechery, wherefore they trust themselves saved, as it were, with sickerness (security); and because of chastity only, which they bear outwardly, they ween they surpass all others as saints. . . . (*id.* p. 16).

Strangely in contrast with this sense of eminence and security there sometimes appears also an envy of others' spiritual well being, an instinctive feeling of bitterness when a neighbour shows signs of holiness or of divine favours. This is a strange temptation in one who has been seeking the good and desiring to love God wholly, and often it is only a passing feeling which is quickly recognised for its ugly character. Nevertheless sometimes it does provide a very real obstacle to entering into this new way. In contrast to 'the true soul' who casts out pride and wrath, Richard Rolle describes the envious man who raises ill reports about his neighbour, who feels down-hearted when others are praised. 'But the soul the which is but a little kindled with heavenly contemplation cannot seek that vainglory of slipping (i.e. passing) praise. . . . For where any are that love God, they truly desire the profit of their fellows as of themselves'. (*id.* p. 123).

Perhaps the most inevitable obstacle to a full entry into the illuminative way is the continual existence of weakness of character and of personal idiosyncrasies. For although the purifications have cleansed a good deal of the dross, a man's character has not been transformed or changed in any fundamental way in the first stage. He still lives and acts in a very human way and his own personal characteristics will still be present. The quick tempered man will not give way to his temper wilfully, but he will remain irascible and easily riled. The sentimental man will find himself carried easily away by en-

thusiasm for passing things, such as the latest miracle or the sayings of some new ecstasica. Rolfe himself does not show what would now be called psychological insight in this matter. He was not in danger of turning into himself; his spirituality was very objective so that he is mainly concerned with deliberate and outstanding sins on the one hand and the love of God on the other. But certain it is that these weaknesses appeared to him as the great stumbling block to progress (cf: *Fire of Love*, Misyn p. 168). The constant failure in one particular direction will often keep a man for long in the first stages of the spiritual life. It is only when he is willing to be plunged into the night of the senses that he releases himself from these imperfections and this very human mode of life. Especially, too, in the matter of the virtues—he must be ready to relinquish his habitual attitude towards them; he must not continue to exercise them as though he were only just beginning. He has to be generous and ready to be open hearted and magnanimous, for otherwise he will gauge his actions by what he is used to being instead of by what he is called to be. St Thomas, in speaking of the increase or lessening of charity, points out that it is of the nature of charity that it can itself never diminish without wholly being extinguished. If you love God, you cannot then proceed to love him less. Of itself the virtue brings a total love or none at all. And yet by a continuous lack of generosity the soul can be weakened and put in a state where what is contrary to charity may easily prevail. The reason is that venial sin itself is concerned with the things which lead to God rather than with God himself. Any sin that is directed against God himself would be serious and destroy charity which is concerned with him alone. Therefore venial sin is not directly against charity; but venial sin does diminish charity indirectly by removing the means through which it usually works. Love of God will be shown in acts of obedience, consequently constant venial sins of disobedience will hamper the exercise of charity. In this way a man without falling into grave sin, which is not so likely at the end of the purgative way, will perhaps remain ungenerous and even careless in the matter of venial sins. He will hesitate to step any further forward.

Père Garrigou Lagrange, writing of those who are shy of this new invitation of Christ, says: 'The proficient, who is content to behave as a beginner, ceases to progress and becomes a "retarded soul". There is a considerable number of such souls and we do not take sufficient account of it. How many there are who set about developing their minds, extending their knowledge of their external activities . . . and yet take little trouble to grow in supernatural charity, which should have pride of place and inspire and enliven

our whole life. . . .' (*Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation*, i, p. 230.) There will be many priests and those in charge of the spiritual welfare of Christians who will agree with this author with regard to the number who make a certain progress and then fall back into the uncertain state of the beginner because they are not ready to live really supernaturally but cling on to their old human ways.

Rolle for his part makes a continual plea for a complete turning to Christ. It would be a hopeless task to begin to quote him on this topic. He never ceases from urging his readers to hand themselves over completely to the love of Jesus. He is, too, principally concerned with contemplatives and even solitaries and he gives the impression that even many of these men and women hesitate on the edge of this new sea of love, not being prepared to plunge in. The third degree of love is contemplative love, which seeks solitude and if his readers want to open their hearts to this love, which is in God's gift alone, they must seek only Jesus with unstinted generosity.

And therefore it behoves thee to forsake all worldly solace, that thy heart be bound to the love of no creature nor to any business on earth; that thou mayest be in silence, ever stable and stalwart, with thy heart in the love and fear of God. (*Ego Dormio*—Heseltine, p. 98.)

Always he is urging these solitaries to prepare their hearts for true love of Jesus.

Through the activities of spiritual exercises and the possibilities of mortification in the purgative way, the individual has learnt sufficiently how to subjugate his spirit to the human mode of Christian prayer and action. Now his spirit needs to be wholly surrendered to the Holy Spirit in order to live in the fullness of Christian life. It is therefore necessary to open the door which leads out into the darkness of the night of the senses. This new form of purification, which proceeds from God's own activities, is evidently necessary to overcome these tendencies to satisfaction and tardiness. This night of the senses is the first characteristic of the illuminative way and it follows the easy dalliance of the soul by God at the conclusion of the first stage.

The unsuspecting reader may at this stage throw up his hands in despair: what! more purifications, nights, darknesses, hardships, crosses: one would have thought that after the first stage of purification the Christian might be able to find some peace and joy somewhere. It would be an understandable mistake to regard these nights in terms of the hardships of the first stage of the spiritual life, for one who knows only that cross of striving to be virtuous



and mortify his passions and vices. But the 'purifications' to which the soul is now submitted are not to be compared with those that have gone before. It is almost a mistake to use the same word. That is why Richard Rolle is such an excellent guide to this new period, for he speaks always in terms of the love of Christ. And the dark night of the senses is first and foremost a new state of love. It is in fact a very positive thing. A recent writer thus distinguishes its principal characteristics: 'It is essentially a state of infused contemplation. . . . It is secondarily, and as an accessory, a state of suffering and purification' (*La Pratique de l'Oraison Mentale*, by Dom Belorgey, ii, p. 2). This is a just distinction and it is important to realise that it is in itself a matter of a new kind of contemplation, rather than a new kind of mortification. It involves the latter, and certainly a good deal of pain is necessary to eradicate the pride and selfishness already alluded to. The nature of this contemplation frequently mentioned by Richard Rolle, theologically described by St John of the Cross, and placed in the centre of controversy in modern times, will require a separate article. Here we will concentrate on the secondary aspects as they refer to the imperfections and temptations which beset the soul as it approaches this new life.

God leaves those who are making progress, says St John of the Cross, 'so completely in the dark that they know not whither to go with their sensible imagination and meditation: for they cannot advance a step in meditation . . . their inward sense being submerged in this night, and left with such dryness that not only do they experience no pleasure and consolation in the spiritual things . . . but they find insipidity and bitterness in the said things. . . . He (God) sets them down from his arms and teaches them to walk with their own feet, which they feel to be very strange for everything seems to be going wrong with them' (*Dark Night*, I, 8). And the Mystic Doctor proceeds to describe the signs which show this aridity to be the work of God rather than backsliding darkness.

The hermit of Hampole describes this state of dryness rather briefly, when he is dealing with the length of time taken after the first conversion before a man can reach this true contemplation. He insists that it is in the gift of God above and is only 'gotten in great time and with great labour' (*Fire of Love*—Misyn, p. 134).

Profiting little by little, at the last they are made strong in spirit. Then afterward they have received sadness of manners, and so far as this present changeableness suffers, have attained to stability of mind: for with great travails is some perfection gotten (*Ibid*, p. 19).

But the insipidity of holy things which oppresses the soul at this

time may account for his lack of appreciation of the liturgy. For it is true that one who is really being called into this second way of love will strangely enough find all the things which had been at first such an inspiration become curiously meaningless. The mind can recognise their goodness, their utility, their theological soundness, but the spirit can make nothing of them. The splendour of the Christmas celebrations are assented to by the mind but the soul feels high and dry, wishing almost to run away from the great solemnities of Midnight Mass and the sweet homeliness of the Crib—to run away into a corner alone. No wonder St John of the Cross says that everything seems to be going wrong.

Because in the Kirk of God there are singers ordained in this degree and set to praise God and to stir the people to devotion, some have come to me asking why I would not sing as other men when they have oftentimes seen me in solemn Masses (*Fire of Love*, p. 132).

Of course for Rolle this difficulty arose mainly from the presence of the inward gift of song and the somewhat individualistic desire to be alone with this special experience, and yet it describes well the feeling of one who may have found great relish in the full solemnity of the liturgy and then suddenly finds it all withdrawn. He is naturally dismayed, and naturally also misunderstood by all those around who bide by the obvious teaching and encouragement of the Church. This is *the* way to praise God, join in the spirit of the liturgy, offer Mass with the people and sing happily in the services of the Church. Yes, replies the wondering soul, that is the way but it leaves me utterly cold. Rolle suffered much from the attacks of good living people, who noticed that he preferred low Masses and did not join in the singing, even when he appeared at high Mass. And we may say in general that this is a period of misunderstandings and persecutions from good people. It is particularly hard, for the poor individual is sufficiently perplexed by his own inward dryness; he cannot be sure where he is or what is happening to his spirit. Perhaps he is thrown aside after all, discarded by God because of his lack of generosity. And then authority steps in and tells him he is self-opinionated, proud and over confident of his own views. His friends tell him he has ceased to be friendly and has removed himself to a distance, those who looked upon him as a budding saint tell him how disappointed they are in his apparent failure. His work seems not to prosper, his time of prayer is a torture. Indeed this is a night. Perhaps his critics are right; what use to continue in a life which has become almost meaningless?

*Usquequo Domine oblivisceris me in finem?* 'How long, Lord,

forgettest thou me?' The voice of holy men that covet and yearn the coming of Jesu Christ, that they might live with him in joy. . . . His words may none say soothly but a perfect man or woman that has gathered together all the desires of their soul and with the nail of love fastened them in Jesu Christ, so that they think that one hour of the day were over-long to dwell from him, for them longs aye for him.<sup>2</sup>

The tempests and trials can only be overcome by the certainty of this longing which remains despite the apparent insipidity of spiritual things. *Accedia* brings a very different tastelessness, one which has no desire and no love for God. This is no acidity but aridity brought by God upon the soul to humble it, to increase its thirst for himself, to make it understand it can turn to no one but to him only, to him who has the power to heal and to perfect. Nothing now remains of much interest or desire save God alone. The things that were on the way to God, the acts of worship, the joy of companionship, the thrill of doing an act of mercy for his sake, these remain good and indeed very good, but they no longer retain much attraction in themselves. It is a Night of the Senses; the senses can find no joy in their natural object, in sights and sounds and feelings. This may be an unnatural state, against the nature of the senses, held back as it were by God from relishing what he made them to relish, but it is needful for the birth in the soul of infused contemplation.

Ghostly gifts truly dress a devout soul to love burningly: to meditate sweetly; to contemplate highly; to pray devoutly; and praise worthily; to desire Jesu only, to wash the mind from filth of sins; to slaken fleshly desires; and to despise all earthly things; and to paint the wounds and Christ's cross in mind; and, with an unwearied desire, with desire to sigh for the sight of the most glorious clearness. (*Fire of Love*—Misyn, p. 113.)

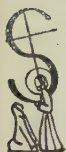
<sup>2</sup> The whole of this commentary on Psalm 12 should be read in this context. I have modernised the first paragraph from *English Writings of Richard Rolle*, H. E. Allen, p. 10. Cf. also *Fire of Love*—Misyn, p. 40.



## TWO TREATISES OF ST AUGUSTINE

BY

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.



OMETIME in the first few years of the fifth century a deacon at Carthage began to feel discouraged about his work and wrote for advice to St Augustine. His letter prompted the short treatise known as *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, a book on the matter and method to be used in the preliminary instruction of would-be Catholics, which was to become one of the best known and influential of Augustine's works. In considering the personal worries of the deacon Deogratias, he laid down principles whose force has in no way lessened with time. The treatise has all the psychological wisdom and the epigrammatic vigour which so often make Augustine's writings sound almost contemporary in modern ears. It springs from experience, as its illustrations show, and the repeated assurance that the problems of Deogratias were common to all engaged in routine instruction.

Deogratias was, in fact, a fairly successful catechist. What he had to do was to give the first, general instruction to those who thought they would like to become catechumens, that is, begin a full course of regular instruction. Having said much the same rather elementary things time and again, he felt that his teaching was going stale. He worried sometimes as to whether he got anything across at all, his words sounded so inadequate in his own ears. At other times he chafed under the necessity of leaving more interesting work in order to interview callers inquiring about the Christian faith. Augustine took up each point. He knew what a sinking feeling could rise in the catechist's heart when the listener who had been attentive to begin with began to yawn or to fidget; and the anxiety there could be about the possibility of the very words of instruction sowing error rather than truth. Words at best are poor things when divine mystery is to be revealed, and Deogratias need not expect to feel perfectly satisfied with his language. 'For my part', Augustine said, 'I am nearly always dissatisfied with my discourse. For I am desirous of something better, which I often inwardly enjoy before I begin to unfold my thought in spoken words; but when I find that my powers of expression come short of my knowledge of the subject, I am sorely disappointed that my tongue has not been able to answer the desire of my mind. For I desire my hearer to understand all that I understand, and I feel that I am not speaking in such a manner as

to effect that. This is so chiefly because intuition floods the mind, as it were, with a sudden flash of light, while the expression of it in speech is a slower, drawn-out, and far different process, and while speech is being formed, intellectual apprehension has already hidden itself in the secret recesses; nevertheless, because it has stamped in a wonderful way certain imprints upon the memory, these endure for the length of time it takes to pronounce the words, and from these imprints we construct those audible symbols which are called 'language'. And he goes on to enlarge on the limitation of language, with its variety of signs for even the commonest sensible phenomena. Problems of communication are inevitable in the nature of things, though they can be partly met by careful consideration of the nature of the listener.

One of the first things, therefore, that a catechist must do is to find out what he can about his listener, and especially why he thinks of becoming a Christian, what kind of education he has had, what books he has read if he is an educated man. The information gained on these points will suggest where instruction should start, what is to be left out as unnecessary, what to be stressed. The more literate a man is, for example, the more need probably to enlarge on the importance of humility. Rhetoricians, more used to eloquence than to serious thought, must be assured 'that there is no voice to reach the ears of God save the emotion of the heart. Thus they will not smile contemptuously if they happen to observe that some ministers of the Church either fall into barbarisms or solecisms when calling upon Almighty God, or do not understand and badly punctuate words which they are pronouncing'. By attending to the quality of the hearer the teacher will be more likely to make an impression on him, and seeing an impression being made will be encouraged himself, for 'a hearer who remains unmoved makes the speaker weary'. Sometimes, of course, the hearer may be so slow-witted as to baffle all the speaker's art, and every inducement fail to rouse him. Then, 'we should bear with him in a compassionate spirit, and after briefly running through the other points, impress on him in a way to inspire awe the truths that are most necessary concerning the unity of the Catholic Church, temptations, and the Christian manner of living in view of the future judgment; and we should rather say much on his behalf to God, rather than say much to him about God'.

Such an attitude of patient understanding is only possible where there is great love of God on the part of the teacher. In the first part of the treatise, where the matter and method of instructing is under discussion, there is steady insistence on the primacy of love. Not only must the catechist's teaching point always to the love of God and

lead the hearer towards that end, it must spring from charity to be truly good itself, 'for then only is a work truly good, when the purpose of the doer is winged with love'. The style of teaching will differ for this person or that, but there must be one love for all. The work to be done is God's work, done according to Christ's example, a pouring out of the love of the Holy Spirit which God has placed in the teacher's own heart. Where love is in command impatience at interruption will vanish in the recognition of God's will. Nor will there be weariness in having to repeat simple and familiar things, 'for in proportion as we dwell in others through the bond of love, so do things which were old become new to us also'. This is found true when we do no more than show earthly sights to visiting friends. 'How much more, then, ought we to rejoice when men now approach to study God . . . and how much more ought we to be renewed in their newness, so that if our preaching as being a matter of routine is somewhat dull, it may grow interesting because of our hearers for whom it is all new'. From his own experience St Augustine knows that he reacts differently to the man before him, according as the latter is dull or clever, rich or poor, a product of this or that environment or intellectual movement; that the nature of the reaction influences his address, and that even love itself must act variously. 'Love itself is in travail with some, becomes weak with others; is at pains to edify some, dreads to be a cause of offence to others; stoops to some, before others stands with head erect; is gentle to some, and stern to others; and enemy to none, a mother to all.' There is the constant element in the situation—charity must be mother to all.

This insistence on love which marks the first part, the fifteen short chapters in which Deogratias is offered advice, is found also in the second part. There, in chapters 16 to 27, two model catecheses are set out in answer to Deogratias's request for examples, and in the last paragraph of all are some lines typical of Augustine, a summary of much that he wrote elsewhere, his constant message not only to those under instruction but to all calling themselves Christian. 'Imitate, then, the good, bear with the evil, love all; for you do not know what he shall be tomorrow who today is evil. And do not love their wrong-doing, but love them to the end that they may attain to holiness; for not only is love of God enjoined upon us, but likewise love of our neighbour, and on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets.'

It is such passages as these which make so many lesser works of St Augustine admirable introductions to his thought, and worth study in themselves whether followed by wider reading in his larger works or not. There is reason, therefore, to be grateful to the Newman Bookshop, the American publishing firm which has launched a series



of English translations of the Fathers, for having decided to include several of the most notable of St Augustine's opuscula in that series. Two are now available:<sup>1</sup> *De Catechizandis Rudibus* under the title *The First Catechetical Instruction*, and the work usually known as the *Enchiridion*, under the title *Faith, Hope, and Charity*—which reveals its subject at a glance. The latter treatise, written about 421-3, also in answer to a specific request, is more knotty than the earlier work. It includes discussions of the nature of evil, of the consequences of the Fall, and of the nature of lying, which not only refer the reader to some of Augustine's major controversial works but also bring him up against some of the most debated of the saint's theological conclusions. Each volume has a short introduction on the time and circumstances of the work's composition, and its significance; a translation of the text in full, and copious notes. These are valuable not only for the commentary they offer on theologically important sections of the text, but also for their notes on sources, on language, on parallel passages in other Fathers, and for their references to relevant critical studies. *The First Catechetical Instruction* is an especially notable contribution to the series, being an adaptation and revision of the larger work by Dr Christopher which, when it appeared in 1927, was recognised as superlative by no less an authority than Professor Souter, writing in *The Journal of Theological Studies*. The quotations given above witness to its readability. The editor of the other treatise, though less impressive in his commentary is almost as successful in his translation. Judged by the two volumes of Augustine, the series *Ancient Christian Writers* is one to be welcomed both by those looking for theological writing in contemporary English, and by students who want help in their approach to the original texts.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Christian Writers*. St Augustine: *The First Catechetical Instruction* (*De Catechizandis Rudibus*), translated and annotated by the Rev. Joseph P. Christopher, Ph.D. St Augustine: *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, translated and annotated by the Very Rev. Louis A. Arand, SS.S.T.D. The Newman Bookshop, Westminster, Maryland. (English price, 13s. 6d. each.)

# FURTHER LETTERS TO BLESSED DIANA

BY

BL. JORDAN OF SAXONY  
(Translated by K. E. Pond)

## XVIII

**B**ROTHER JORDAN, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear daughters in Christ the Sisters of St Agnes at Bologna: eternal salvation and the embrace of the Lamb whom they are following.

Beloved daughters, although perhaps you do run in the fragrance of the ointments of the Beloved, see that you walk warily. So run that you may obtain: that is, let none of you be either too slow and lazy in her running, or, on the other hand, hasten too much so that her feet stumble and the purpose of her journeying is thus frustrated. For strait and narrow is the way that leads to life and it behoves us to enter upon it warily, lest we turn aside to the right hand through carelessness or to the left by an excess of austerity.

Amid these two dangers, what I fear most for you is that you afflict your bodies beyond the bounds of discretion, and thus falling into the worst possible mistake you will be hindered in the way of the Lord which leads to the city in which we shall have our dwelling, to the city of the Lord of hosts which the Lord has founded to last for ever. The foundations of that city are in the holy mountains, or rather in the holy mountain of the Lord, the mountain which his right hand has acquired, that is his Son, who is the right hand of God the Father, upon whom the foundations of this city rest for the Most High himself hath founded it. O heavenly city, care-free dwelling-place, fatherland containing everything which delights, where there is a people which hath no complaint, inhabitants who are at peace, dwellings in which there is no poverty—glorious things are said of thee, thou City of God. The way of dwelling in a city is perilous; but when it is given to us to reach that blessed Jerusalem which is built as a city, there there is no danger to be feared; there shall be no cause of ruin there, but eternal tranquillity, eternal stability, eternal security, where, speaking of the dwellers of that city, the holy citizens, 'Now', saith the Spirit, 'let them rest from their labours'. In the meantime, as long as we are in this life it

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<sup>1</sup> See *Life of the Spirit*, March 1947.

behoves us to labour, conducting ourselves with discretion and not impetuously, until we reach this heavenly city into which Jesus Christ our Lord is leading us, he who is blessed above all things for ever. Amen.

Dear Sisters, if anything happen to you in the way of adversity or trouble, bear it all with patience and an undisturbed mind, looking forward to great glory in recompense for your small troubles, joy for your sorrow, everlasting consolation for your grief.

Goodbye, and pray for me as I do for you every day in my prayers, begging the Father of mercies and God of all consolation that he may give you all a heart with which to worship him and do his will.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

### XXXI

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dearest daughter in Christ, Diana, salvation and the joy of the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

You know, dear daughter, that as the Scripture says: 'Through many tribulations it behoves us to enter into the kingdom of God' and that when we have arrived there we shall be free from every tribulation.

Meanwhile your Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, will never leave you, for he says: 'I will not desert you nor leave you'; and even if by chance he should sometimes seem to have withdrawn from you, you can say: 'Why, O Lord, hast thou withdrawn afar off?' why dost thou despise me at these times, that is, when it is the right time to help me. But when is that? He can reply: 'In trouble'. Of course he will never desert you then, but will draw nearer, because 'The Lord is nigh to those who are troubled in heart'. If sometimes you are cast down and pursue your way with sadness, when the enemy is disturbing your (peace of) heart, think over what your Bridegroom, who is the joy of angels, says: 'My soul', he says, 'is sorrowful even unto death'. If you are sad, he says again: 'Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow'. For he alone really knows labour and grief. After labour, we have rest; after sorrow, eternal consolation. According to the great multitude of our sorrows, his consolations will rejoice our hearts; he your Bridegroom will grant us this, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Do not abstain too much from food, drink and sleep, but act with discretion and patience in all things. Greet all your Sisters for me and the Lady Otta senior, and Sisters Otta and Jacobina. I am so



glad that you have not been too much upset by your brother's death. Be careful that the Sisters do not practise too many penances and in everything proceed with order. I have written these things to you with my own hand. Farewell in Christ and pray for me.

I, Brother Henry, greet you, Diana, with all my heart.<sup>2</sup>

### XXXVII

To his dear daughters in Christ, the Sisters of St Agnes at Bologna, Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, salvation and the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

You see that by the Lord's will I have again been prevented from coming to the General Chapter. And if this were not trying for me for any other reason, on your account alone it would trouble me, chiefly because I cannot see you and take comfort in your presence. But it behoves us to take hold of the will of God with patience. He himself shows you in every possible way in this life that hope is not to be placed in man nor consolation in any mortal being: but rather he himself is to be loved with our whole heart, with our whole soul and with our whole strength, because he alone can and ought to satisfy the soul, in the present life by grace, in the future by glory. Therefore, dear daughters, show yourselves constant and joyful in all things, with discretion, so that you may be numbered not with the foolish, but with the wise virgins. At present I have not the time to write much to you: but I commend your souls and bodies to his mercy in whose hand are all the ends of the earth, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Goodbye and pray for us. Gerard greets you with all devotion and recommends himself to your prayers.

### XLVI

To his dearest daughter, Diana, Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, health and consolation in Christ Jesus.

When it happens to me that I am separated from you, I am not without a certain heaviness of heart, and yet you add to my sorrow. For I see that you are so inconsolably heavy-hearted that I am perforce saddened, not only because of our mutual separation, but also because of your particular desolation. But why are you thus in anguish? Am I not yours, am I not with you all: yours in labour, yours in rest, yours present, yours absent, yours in prayer, sharing in your merit and sharing, I hope, in your reward? What would you do if I were to die?

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<sup>2</sup> This note was added by the secretary.

Clearly it would not be right for you to mourn so inconsolably over my death. For when I die you will not lose me but will be sending me before you to those resplendent dwellings, so that when I am there I, too, may entreat the Father for you and, living with the Lord, I shall be much more useful to you than if I were kept in this world dying (as it were) all day long. And so take comfort: and bear yourself more manfully and take fresh heart in the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Goodbye and greet the Sisters for me, especially your Prioress, Galiana, Juleta, Kardina and any others whom you know to be our friends. Christ Jesus be with your spirit. Amen.

The following letter is not included in the Berthier collection. It is probably the first written by Blessed Jordan to his spiritual daughter. She is addressed as Madame Diana, for she is not yet a member of the Dominican family. The letter is here translated from the French version by Marguerite Aron: *B. Jourdain de Saxe: Lettres à la Bse. Diane d'Andalo* (Ed. du Cerf).

To Madame Diana, his daughter in the fear of the Father, his sister in the adoption of the Son, his beloved in the love of the Holy Spirit, his (future) associate in the religious life, Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, salvation, speedy liberation from present sadness and enjoyment of future bliss.

It is the greatness of your desire which has urged you to write me the letters which you have sent me. I will, then, tell you something about this heavenly desire.

Dear Sister, it was the desire of the Patriarchs which called your Bridegroom, Christ, the Son of God, to come to his pain,<sup>3</sup> and he came. Called down by your desires to delight (i.e. the delight in union with souls), how, then, would he do otherwise than come?

Make all your desires, then, reach out towards heaven. The man who does not want to be on the side of hell consecrates himself entirely to heaven; he who lives on the plain does not dwell in security, for he is exposed to every enemy, but he who has established himself in a fortified camp and in towers is protected. Don't, then, dear Sister, pitch your tent in the plain, but flee to the Strong Place, as David did before Saul, and, through your desire, dwell behind heavenly ramparts, as he did.

I do not think you know German: that is because you have never been in a German-speaking country. In this particular region, only carnal manners of speech are used for 'he who belongs to the earth speaks from the earth'. So, dear daughter, if you want to learn a

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<sup>3</sup> The pain of his incarnation, his human life, his passion and death.

(new) language go and live by your desire in heavenly realms, but when you come down to earth again take some spiritual book which will take the place of a Friar Preacher for you: and you will hear the language of spiritual things; he who has never been in the land of pure spirits never hears it.

You are not unaware that there are two principles in man, body and soul. The body, as you know, does not perish so long as it strives to satisfy its desires in the sphere of corporal things; but the soul is above the body. Don't then, dear Sister, put your body before your spirit, but when you are in quest of nourishment for the spirit, that nourishment which is not found upon earth and which is bought with loving desire and not with money, go into spiritual regions.

What wretch would let himself die of hunger through want of nourishment which he can get by his mere desires? Say with the prophet: 'My eyes are always (turned) towards the Lord, as the eyes of the poor towards the rich from whom they eagerly expect an alms'.

Bees gather earthly honey in earthly flowers, carry it into their hive and there store it up, in foresight for the future. If your spirit is not renewed by spiritual honey, it dies; for I know it is delicate and disdains the use of coarse food; send your spirit, then, dear Sister, to cull the flowers of the heavenly meadows which never fade, so that it may gather their honey and live on it. The whole of this honey is not consumed at a single meal; one keeps a part of it in the hive of one's heart so that when desire grows faint, in oneself and in the reserves that one carries within one, one can find something with which to delight oneself.

And, dear Sister, when at last this good which you are seeking by your desires is yours, then don't forget your poor correspondent.



## REVIEWS

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP. By Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s.)

This is a sequel to the 'First Theophila Correspondence' which has already won for the author deserved fame as a director of the more earnest youth of today. In *Whatsoever He Shall Say* the subject was the straightforward life of prayer and virtue. Here Fr Valentine tackles the difficulties which inevitably crop up after anyone has set about this life seriously. It is very different in character from Fr Boylan's 'Difficulties in Mental Prayer', but it might well become a companion volume to that very valuable introduction to a true way of prayer. The *Inside of the Cup* deals with difficulties and dangers in prayer, with distractions and temptations. It is extremely practical on the matter of the virtue of purity and its opposing temptations. Here the author calls in the aid of modern psychology in the matter of 'relaxing', etc., thereby exemplifying the contention that the best spiritual directors make good use of, at least common sense, psychology. The modern director can continue to use psychology as of yore, but he must be careful to avoid being used by modern psychology. In this Fr Valentine succeeds for, although he gives a bibliography of works on the art of 'relaxation', he nowhere shows that he pins all his faith to these natural remedies. The result is a most practical and useful book for almost any Christian. Theophila, some will be relieved to hear, is less bumptious and more retiring here, and even hands over to her friend David for some of the correspondence.

JOHN HUNSTER

WIND ON CHARNWOOD. By Bruno Walker, O.C.R. (Privately published; 5s.)

Father Bruno Walker is a Cistercian monk at Mount Saint Bernard Abbey, Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire, and this small book of poems may be had there and at Duckett's bookshop. That a contemplative monk should let his poetic voice be heard outside his own religious enclosure is in itself an event of some interest; he of all men nowadays must have a message for the world without.

*Wind on Charnwood* contains a dozen short poems in the first twelve pages; the rest of the book is taken up with two much longer efforts, *The Face of the Earth* and *Lord Peace*. Father Walker is a far better craftsman within the limits of conventional forms than when he allows himself the latitude of free verse, and *Distraction*, in twenty-four nicely chiselled lines, is the most attractive poem in the book. It offers what Pater called a 'freshness of thought and feeling'.

Turn me away from your fragrances,  
Mould and bracken in rain,

Carnation and rose,  
 The precious beyond all price  
 Odour of your passing through the spinney  
 And through the cornfields and gardens.

*Air-Compressor* is a satisfactory litany of nostalgic realism, and the *Sonnet*, on page 10, could be used for meditation.

Alice Meynell declared that 'those who have little to say clamour for much space in which to say it', and the author will have experienced the difficulty of sustaining a semi-dramatic sequence in the free style of some of the modern poets. Father Walker has a great deal to say in his two long pieces; he has a sound word-sense, a happy perception of spiritual values, and can create atmosphere.

But the shorter poems seem to strike a more authentic note, and we hope he will strike it again.

EDWIN ESSEX, O.P.

NOT ONE SPARROW. By E. Roberts. (Douglas Organ; 3s. 6d.)

Dust-cover blurbs can mislead by saying nothing in many words. These short stories do show human insight and literary elegance, but these attributes, being the minimum demanded of narrative prose, can cover many defects. These stories of 'spiritual adventure' (I suppose we are now committed to this use of the word spiritual when we mean supernatural or uncommon) range from telepathy to answered prayers, and they set out to show that there is something beyond the chemical composition that many of us mistake for creation. That is all excellent, and undoubtedly needs saying. All the more reason, therefore, why it should be said not only with literary elegance, whatever that might be, but with power and precision. Like any artist, a writer must respect both his medium and his object. The work of God will speak for itself if we portray it accurately and there should be no need for comment and interpretation. Many of these stories would be improved if the last didactic paragraph were omitted. At the same time, if God's work is to be allowed to speak for itself, it must be set before us in words that live. Otiose epithets ('poor little legs'), clichés ('the cup of her human happiness was fulfilled') and woolly substitutes, even when tempered by inverted commas, are all no more than half alive and dull the light by which we should see the Almighty's hand. These defects are all the more deplorable because of the importance of the subject. Nevertheless this writing is not without merit; it has flashes of life and sting ('We never know when we board a crowded bus that we may not be strap-hanging with a saint'), and with pruning could be good.

G. M.

SANCTITY WILL OUT. By Georges Bernanos; translated by R. Batchelor. (Sheed and Ward; 6s.)

Sanctity, it seems, can be bought at too high a price. Six shillings is certainly excessive for a pamphlet of fifty-odd pages, even when they are by M. Bernanos, and one would gladly sacrifice the deplor-

able Ingres picture of Joan of Arc at Rheims Cathedral, which adds 'tone' to this dear little book.

Joan is the authentic voice of Catholic France. She is condemned by the tribunal of the Church. She is a saint. How are these propositions reconciled? 'Our Church is the church of the saints. The whole vast machinery of wisdom, strength, supple discipline, glory and majesty, is of itself nothing unless it is animated by love.' With all his customary fire and eloquence (indifferently served, it is true, by his translator) Bernanos gives the answer. I. E.

BEHIND THAT WALL. An Introduction to some Classics of the Interior Life. By E. Allison Peers. (S.C.M. Press; 6s.)

From St Augustine to Thomas Traherne Professor Allison Peers leads the 'ordinary reader of books', for whom he is writing, with unflagging enthusiasm and unfailing discrimination. His purpose is a simple one: to give some idea of what the great Christian mystics had to say, and why they said it, so that they may become available to all who would seek to go 'behind that wall' where, in the words of the Canticle, 'my Beloved standeth'.

The form of most of these essays (originally given as broadcast talks) allows for little development or subtlety of argument. It is, frankly, a popular book, and it is to be warmly welcomed as such. Even so, one is constantly aware (as in the essays on St Bernard or St Teresa) of the rich store of learning on which these deceptively simple pages draw. It is no small achievement to give in a few pages an accurate account, together with illuminating quotations, of writers so various as St Ignatius Loyola and Henry Vaughan, of the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and St Francis of Sales. Professor Peers is able to do this because he sees so well the fundamental unity that joins all who have ever written of the spiritual life. Moreover he sees it not as a speculatively interesting idea, but as a truth and a vital one.

*Behind That Wall* will be especially valuable for the many people who appreciate the depth and joy of the great mystical writers, but have a sadly inadequate appreciation of their presuppositions. Professor Peers is a scholar who *believes* in the values of the writers his scholarship has done so much to reveal. And that is a great advantage.

I. E.

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE. By Catherine de Hueck. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

This discursive, generous, breathless book reflects the work of its author so faithfully that it far outweighs more solemn theses on the Mystical Body and its implications. For that work is simply the Christian one of reconciliation, of breaking down the walls of partition (and here especially that of colour) which divide the unity that our Lord came on earth to establish, and which his Church is



ordained to exemplify. In practice, for the Baroness de Hueck, this means living among the poorest of American negroes, not with the patronising uplift of a social worker, but rather in the shared poverty of a fellow member of Christ.

The work of the various Friendship Houses—which is as various as human needs can be—is only possible because of the supreme faith of the Baroness and her fellow workers. In this country we are sometimes tempted to say hard things of American Catholicism, and especially of its attitude to the negro population. *Friendship House* is a corrective to rash judgment. As yet the movement it represents is small, but its inspiration is so firmly rooted in the Gospels, and in the life of St Francis and Blessed Martin de Porres, that no Christian can doubt its ultimate triumph. As ever, the transcendent truth of Catholicism is not a proposition to assent to merely: it is a life in which to be incorporated. And in Friendship House we see what is, in the end, the only answer to the reproaches of the unbeliever: the unity of the redeemed is a truth to be *lived*. And that imbues the whole story we are given in this most evangelical of books.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF YOUNG CHILDREN. For Parents and Teachers.  
By S. N. D. (Sands; 5s.)

This is a new edition of a book that has already done good service. Originally intended for the Infant School, it has now been adapted, apparently with the Westminster Scheme in mind, for juniors or at any rate for lower junior classes. Each lesson begins with a scene from our Lord's life and concludes with a series of questions and suggestions for activity and practical work. Some of these seem to us a little advanced for infants but perhaps they are not meant for them. A second part gives lessons on a little more advanced doctrine, a third on prayer, the Mass and the liturgical year, and a fourth on First Confession and Communion.

The whole book is written with the freshness, inventiveness and simplicity that are characteristic of S. N. D.'s work and is an indispensable aid-book to any teacher (or parent) who takes her job seriously. A table of contents would facilitate quick reference.

J. D. C.

EVERY COMMON BUSH. By Hilary C. Boyle. (Sheed and Ward; 6s.)

The only satisfactory way in which a book for children can be judged, I think, is to read it to them and study their reactions.

When I told a class of boys and girls of various ages that I wanted their help to review *Every Common Bush* they were delighted, but their faces fell when they heard it was a collection of flower legends.

The collection contains fourteen stories; several old favourites and others little known this side of the Irish Sea. They are filled with the essence of a lively faith and possess the power of transmitting to

children a wonderful *joie d'esprit* with which the book is permeated.

The illustrations are worthy of this lovely book and Caryl House-lander earns our gratitude for giving us pictures which need no apology when showing them to children.

The 'Shining One' in the Snowdrop Legend is exceptionally fine and satisfying, which is seldom the case with 'holy picture' angels. It is a pity several less-known flowers are not illustrated.

The following comments of the children will do more than any words of mine to show their appreciation:

- (1) . . . These stories make you love our Lord more.
- (2) . . . Although legends they seem almost genuine (true).
- (3) . . . They make our Lady more real.
- (4) The lad of ten who 'hated' such stories wrote, 'If I tried for a hundred years I could never do what the editor has contrived in a day'.

SISTER M. WALBURGA, O.P.

SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS OF OUR TIMES. By Luigi Sturzo. (Longmans; 12s. 6d.)

Few men could have combined the active and intellectual lives to the same degree and with the same success as Don Sturzo. This book is a product of that combination and gives the reader much of the best of both worlds. It is not as if the author had been merely active as a politician and then spent the long period of retirement occupied exclusively with the things of the spirit. It is clear from this book alone, if we did not know it already, that his political activity was one expression of a deeply pondered and carefully constructed philosophy—a philosophy which is genuinely Catholic, stimulated and widened by contact with the best minds of our time of different faiths. Hardened by contact with life, mainly the turbulent life of politics, it has been further deepened and refined during the years of exile.

But even so versatile a personality has to be fitted into a groove by the reader, and it seems probable that the second half of this book will be preferred to the first: not only because it is easier, but because it more truly corresponds to the aims and talents of the author. He claims to have written a book of experiences, but while *The Quest of the Truth* is based on the writings and conversations of other men—critically examined indeed and reviewed in the light of the author's own philosophy, even to some extent re-lived—*The Quest of the Good* is more directly the fruit of personal contacts: with God in prayer, with men who have tried to live heroically according to God's will in the upheavals of modern times. Among the best of these essays is *The Spiritual Life of the Average Man*; the points he makes are familiar enough—the supreme importance of sanctifying grace as the beginning and end of perfection, with the consequent impossibility of *final* states in this world or *separate* ways—but they need to be repeated in this succinct and clear fashion.

Indicative of his own outlook on the active life and a useful reminder to those energetic people who attend lectures on 'The Urgent Need of Catholic Action' (a title announced in the Catholic Press only a few weeks ago) is his reminder that the Conferences of the St Vincent de Paul Society were really meant to be conferences, to educate the members in faith and charity, with good works as a means of preserving them from temptation and to provide opportunities for exercising their love.

EDWARD QUINN

CHRIST CONSCIOUSNESS. By A. Gardeil, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

This is a translation by a Dominican of Carisbrooke of the author's *Le Sens du Christ*. It presents a series of six meditations on the Pauline theme, 'For me, to live is Christ'. Besides being the sole medium of redemption, Christ is our justice, sanctification and wisdom; above all, he is our 'life'. 'But what is the meaning of this expression, "For me, to live is Christ"? It is used in the same sense when a mother says of her child, "He is my life": that is to say, "All my thoughts and my love and my hope are centred on him". When one being plays a preponderant part in the direction of the life of another, we can say that it is its life.'

This brief extract illustrates the simplicity, the homeliness almost, of the late Fr Gardeil's treatment; which is what we should expect in notes for retreat conferences. And yet there is a depth and accuracy of statement which reveal the true theologian: 'You may ask, "What about God? Is not God in his essence, in his Trinity—is not he our life?" Of course God is our life. He is our Father, in that he has adopted us in his Son. But so long as we remain on earth, as members of Christ who saves us, under whose direct action we are, Christ first of all is our life.' And again: 'In the sixth chapter of his gospel, St John presents communion as first of all a participation in Christ by faith and love, and then as the real eating of his body and blood'. How acceptable it is, yet how comparatively rare, to find the point made that our Lord's insistence on the need for men to eat his body and blood is the climax of his teaching on the necessity of faith and charity! This little book will be welcomed by all who seek to build their spiritual life on the principles of sound theology.

ÆLRED GRAHAM, O.S.B.



## E X T R A C T S

THE CONCLUSIONS of the Congress of the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique*, held at Lyons last September to consider Sunday in Catholic life, have now been published. We print a summary.

1. Sunday is the weekly celebration of Easter: it is at once the commemoration of the Passion of Jesus Christ, the joyous remembrance of his Resurrection, the consciousness of his presence in the mystery of the Mass, and the expectation of his glorious coming again.

2. The day of rest is that on which man turns to God to acknowledge him as Master; it is a day of liberty, of joy, of truth and of beauty. (Romano Guardini.)

3. The day of rest is not merely natural to man, but sacred also. There can be no deproletarianisation without Sunday, no Sunday without religion, no religion without the Mass. (Canon Cardijn.)

4. Apart from the Mass, there is no standard expression of Sunday in social life. It will vary according to districts, times of the year, etc. (Abbé Michonneau.)

5. Before insisting on Sunday obligations, we must give expression to the splendour of the Day of the Lord; its mystery should be a principal element in Christian education.

6. The essential act of the celebration of Sunday is the Mass, which should be a communal gathering of the faithful, met together to honour our Lord. The ideal is a parochial sung mass at which all go to Holy Communion.

7. If circumstances make a morning gathering too difficult, Ordinaries should be entreated to petition the Holy See for permission for the celebration of evening Mass with communion.

8. The times of evening services should be adjusted to suit the needs of the most zealous members of the community.

9. Even though economic circumstances prevent Sunday being a day of rest or render impossible attendance at Mass, yet the obligation remains to celebrate and to sanctify the Day of the Lord.

10. Presence at Mass does not satisfy the full accomplishment of the Sunday precept: evening services, reading of the Bible and family prayers have their place. Even apostolic activity does not dispense from this contemplative element.

11. Before trying out innovations at evening services, parish priests should do their best to make traditional forms work. The bishops are the sole judges of what is best.

12. Christian prayer should be principally inspired by the Bible. Hence the need for liturgical catechesis.

13. The priest's sanctification of his Sunday is the standard

for his flock—both of prayer and of joy. He, however, will rest at another time!

14. Sunday should become again a family feast. Groups, confraternities, etc. should see that none of their activities interferes with this family bond.

15. The joy of Resurrection, celebrated at Mass, should be extended throughout the day and should have its external expression—in clothes, meals, recreation.

16. This inspiration of a communal joy is the work of the laity. 'There can be no Sunday without the laity'. (Père Congar).

17. As to 'servile works' we feel that the moralists should as far as possible take into account living custom, and that they should seriously consider the realities of working-class life. As a counsel, and not as a precept, we consider that professional work (regarded as intellectual) should also be avoided on Sunday.

18. An economic order in which man is so enslaved that Sunday has no reality, or is only a day of animal rest, should be transformed. The Christian has therefore the urgent duty of working for the necessary reforms to bring about such a transformation.

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